ЛИТЕРАТУРОВЕДЕНИЕ

UDC 82.1+82.091

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ON THE CONTEXTS OF EDITH SÖDERGRAN'S RUSSIAN POEM "TIKHO, TIKHO, TIKHO"

For citation: Crnković D. On the contexts of Edith Södergran's Russian poem "Tikho, tikho, tikho". *Scandinavian Philology*, 2018, vol. 16, issue 2, pp. 323–339. https://doi.org/10.21638/11701/spbu21.2018.209

This paper looks to provide a reading of Edith Södergran's only poem written in Russian in its literary, linguistic, cultural and historical contexts. Composed when she was experimenting with multilingual poetry for her so-called *Vaxdukshäft* (Oilcloth Notebook), the poem "Tikho, tikho, tikho" reflects equally an adherence to classical Russian metrical forms and a kinship with the more daring Russian Symbolists, including A. Blok and V. Bryusov. In contrast to some previous studies, which see the poem as a mere juvenilia written in the cultural isolation of a young, "foreign" girl's private milieu, the current article concludes that it was also composed in a spirit of the age and the nation. The poem's varied and stunning imagery, ranging from violence to mystery, speaks of a labyrinth of emotion, inner experiences and political and social awareness. Although the dominant images of destruction, bloodshed and rebirth may have their origins in Södergran's personal encounters with tuberculosis, they do so also in the disparate contexts of a society racked by terrorism and violent revolution, and of a young woman's emerging self-identity. Thus, when examined in the broader context of Södergran's awareness of the literary and cultural mores, and the political upheavals of her times, the poem reflects both her natural poetic talent and her sophisticated vision of the surrounding world, remarkable at such an early stage of her writing career.

Keywords: A. Blok, V. Bryusov, blood imagery, Russian verse, Edith Södergran, literary contexts, symbolism, Symbolists, versification.

More than a century after its composition, Edith Södergran's only Russian poem "Tikho, tikho, tikho" (Quietly, quietly, quietly) continues to intrigue readers with its remarkable imagery and masterful compo-

sitional forms. Indeed, after so many years the poem still benefits from the scholarly scrutiny that brings the contemporary reader closer to understanding of the young poet's remarkable insights. Among the questions that scholars have raised is what impacts the charged poetic atmosphere of Saint Petersburg during Södergran's school days may have had on the poem's production. While it would be tempting to classify too narrowly the milieu that surrounded this short poem's genesis, it can be said without too much exaggeration and even against the backdrop of the near frenzy of poetic output by Russia's Silver Age poets, that this twenty-line verse is remarkable for its linguistic precision, for its maturity from the hand of a fifteen-year-old author and most notably for its formal sophistication and thematic complexity. In spite of these notable artistic qualities, however, some critics have dismissed the poem as simple juvenilia, or have seen it as "merely" a precursor of her future genius (Witt-Bratstrom, Tideström, Birnbaum, Rahikainen)[1].

On a Thursday in early July of 1907 at Raivola (now Roshchino), the young Edith Södergran wrote out the following poem in her *Vaxsdukhäft*:

Ти́хо, ми́хо, ми́хо	*Quietly, quietly, quietly*
Та́йныя си́лы	*Mystical forces*
Скры́лись во мглѣ́.	*have hidden themselves in the mist*
Тёмная, со́чная	*Dark, juicy,*
Ли́пко-густа́я	*sticky-thick blood*
кро́вь полила́сь.	*has begun to flow.*
Тѣ́ни ско́льзят,	*Shadows glide,*
тѣ́ни исче́зли.	*shadows have disappeared.*
Бо́льше ужъ нѣ́тъ ничего́.	*For there is nothing more.*
Пу́сто и мра́чно.	*Empty and dark,*
Въ мра́кѣ холо́дномъ	*In the cold darkness*
Нѣ́тъ ничего́.	*There is nothing.*

[1] I would be remiss were I not to thank the invaluable assistance I have had in writing this paper from my colleagues in the Scandinavian Studies Department at Gustavus Adolphus College: Dr Kjerstin Moody, who originally suggested the topic, Dr Ursula Lindqvist, who provided me with materials on Södergran's early work, and especially Mr David Jessup, who kindly read my manuscript and made insightful suggestions for revision.

Въ тёмной землѣ́	*In the dark earth,*
Напи́танной кро́вью,	*Sated with blood,*
Кро́вью густо́й,	*With thick blood,*
Жи́знь зарожда́ется,	*Life is born,*
Но́вая жи́знь,	*A new life,*
Для ра̀зруше́нья.	*For destruction.*
Си́лы гряду́щего	*The forces of the future*
Въ чёрной землѣ́.	*In the black earth.*

Composed for her *Vaxdukshäft* (Oilcloth Notebook) as she was experimenting with writing poetry in various languages, the poem[2] reflects a thorough knowledge of classical Russian metrical forms as well as a close awareness of both the waning Russian Symbolist movement and approaching modernist trends. Södergran's precocious insights into the poetic arts reflect both future promise and an already deep poetic talent, indicating that even her earliest poems can be discussed and read on their own terms and in their own contexts. Those contexts include not only a political milieu and a personal family and social life, but personal talent and artistic creativity, as well. Thus, it is useful to look at the broad picture when analysing this or any of her poems [Mier-Cruz, 2013, pp. 10–26].

Edith Södergran's language skills are well-known: she had a command of at least five languages at various levels of proficiency as she herself attests and as her contemporaries confirm. That her Russian was native we can also easily assume, given her life circumstances and, of

[2] I have chosen to reproduce the poem as Södergran wrote it in her notebook, with the prerevolutionary Russian orthography (see [Enckell, 1961, pp. 174–175]). As far as I have been able to tell, printed versions of this poem all regularize Södergran's orthography to correspond with the post-revolutionary norms. Curiously, many reproductions ignore Södergran's inconsistent use of capital letters with which she begins most, but not all, lines of the poem. Also curious is the decision by some editors to begin the final stanza of the poem with the word *Новые* Södergran clearly scratched the word out before completing the poem and switched the letter *С* of the word *Силы* from lower to upper case. Similarly, most reproductions give *Во* in the final line for *Въ* although the reproduction printed in Enckell shows that the author seems to have overwritten the Cyrillic letter *о* with the hard sign *ъ*. I have indicated the stressed syllables with the acute accent and the *ё*.

The literal English translation is mine (DC). The two most cited translations into Swedish are by Engdahl and Colliander. Broemer also provides her own English translation [Broemer, 2009, pp. 50–51]:

course, her own and others' testimony to her abiding interest in Russian verse[3]. In her creative output Södergran clearly took advantage of her native talents for learning languages and assimilating their sounds, rhythms and cadences. The *Vaxdukshäft* in which this poem appears is a notable literary production. Far from simply reflecting a schoolgirl's youthful musings it shows a remarkable natural insight into the musicality, form and purpose of poetry in at least three quite different languages German, French and Russian. It is a remarkable talent that so easily assimilated the forms and cadences of German, French and Russian poetics and eventually transformed them into her own, modern and radical style in Swedish.

As for Södergran's political, social and cultural awareness as a teenager, internal evidence from her own poetry and other writings shows a definite awareness of the lively Russian literary scene — which was quite a pervasive part of Petersburg life in those days — and a very good grasp of the Russian political situation. In fact, in the poem under analysis here, the main theme reiterates the apocalyptic motifs of many of her Russian contemporaries' lyrics. The date of the poem's composition — 11 July 1907 — is not insignificant. Historically, this was a time of great upheaval in Russia: the aborted revolution of 1905 was fresh in memory, the national assembly, the second *Duma,* had just been dissolved by Tsar Nicholas (June 1907), and there was a relentless series of ongoing terrorist assassinations[4]. This amalgam of social and political ills, including a pervasive fear of terroristic political attacks, the assumption of an impending revolution, widespread urban poverty, the loss of national pride after the disastrous defeat by Japan in the Russo-Japanese war, the growing militarization before WWI, the ease of effecting anti-Jewish pogroms, all of these added to the sense of an impending catastrophe. In the world of the verbal arts these apocalyptic sentiments are heard from the Symbolists (whose sway over the literary society was beginning to wane at this time) and the Post-symbolists, whose nascent

[3] On Södergran's language skills and abilities in and affinities with Russian see Brunner 54–56. Indeed, even a short read of her youthful poems clearly reveals Södergran's natural feel for the characteristic rhythms of poetry in each individual language.

[4] As many as 1400 deaths in 1906 and 3000 in 1907 were attributed to terrorist acts (Riasanovsky 413). For a summary of the political and social upheavals in the Russian empire at the time see *ibid.* 404–434.

movements, all associated with the Modernist literary trends of the early twentieth century, would convey the dominant literary expressions by the end of the decade and throughout the 1920s[5]. Indeed, both the Symbolists and modernist poets viewed the era as time ripe for change, perhaps violent, perhaps political, perhaps spiritual and mystical[6]. Given these broad interpretations of the age by artists of varying stripes, it is not at all surprising that the young Södergran's poem can be interpreted as a comment on the apocalyptic status of Russia in 1907. Tideström concludes that

> when Edith Södergran talks about shadows that have disappeared in the dark, she is likely thinking of the searches that were carried out against opposition elements after the dissolution of the *Duma*; in Petersburg alone more than a thousand people had been arrested during June, and many had been sent to unknown fates across the Ural-Asian border. Perhaps she also, and especially, had in mind the mass of people who had been imprisoned in the spring for conspiring against the Tsar's life. The poem was written four days after the preliminary investigation had been declared complete and the documents sent to the military court[7].

On the other hand, it would be underestimating Södergran's poetic talent to concentrate only on the socio-political aspects of this poem. For example, Broemer's assessment of the poem as chiefly a reaction to the events of 1905 is somewhat one-sided, failing to take into account Södergran's multi-faceted imagery and poetic sensibilities:

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[5] A thorough discussion of this era and in particular of modernism in Russian literature can be found in Erlich 1994.

[6] Apocalyptic poems were numerous in Russia at the time, given the social and political situations I have detailed above: in addition to Bryusov, worth noting are Blok's poem *Двенадцать* (*The Twelve*) in which the Revolution is led by Jesus Christ, and F. Sologub's anti-theotic poem «Когда я в бурном море плавал» ("As I sailed on the stormy sea") in which the narrator calls on the Devil for salvation, replete with images of a devil-god saving mankind as it drowns. These are but a few examples of the many religious-themed poems that foresaw rough times ahead for Russia that required drastic intervention from supernatural forces. See below for further discussion.

[7] När Edith Södergran här talar om skuggor som försvunnit i mörkret, tänker hon troligen på den jakt som efter andra dumans upplösning anställts på oppositionella element; enbart i Petersburg hade under juni månad över tusen personer arresterats, och massor hade skickats mot okända öden över Asiens gräns. Kanske står för hennes blick också och alldeles särskilt den skara, som under våren fängslats för sammansvärjning mot tsarens liv. Dikten är skriven fyra dagar efter det den föreberedande undersökningen förklarats vara avslutad och handlingama översänts till militärdomstolen (39–40).

> Södergran's poem is graphic. With the characteristic brutality of youth, she writes about what she probably only heard from others, from rumours or the newspapers. We do not have any evidence that she actually witnessed any of the bloodshed, but she had heard enough to commit this information to poetry a few years later. The images of darkness contrasted with blood aptly convey the sense of the event. Everyone knew about the massacre, and it indeed seemed to come out of a period of silence and relative peace. Still, the poet ends with a hopeful note: 'a new future is made.' … There is no question in this poem of whether or not the blood is symbolic. The poet's graphic example conveys the overwhelming events, rather than speak of them metaphorically [Broemer, 2009, p. 49].

It cannot be taken as a given that Södergran is reacting only to the 1905 Revolution or to vaguely distant newspaper reports. While she might not have seen bloodshed first hand, she was doubtless affected, even if indirectly, by the near daily violent events that afflicted St Petersburg and all of Russia at the time. Moreover, the assertion that the graphic imagery is only descriptive of events is strangely near-sighted, especially given both Södergran's sensibilities as a poet and, more directly, the poem's lyrical quality and poetic vision.

From a formal point of view, Södergran's verse reveals a serious grasp of Russian meter and poetics (as, in fact, do her German and French poems of their respective poetic traditions). Henrik Birnbaum has noted that the poem is written in the Russian *taktovík* (*тактовик*), an accentual — not syllabic — verse form whose rhythmical structure is based on equal numbers of stresses in a line with a free number of overall syllables, and two or three unstressed syllables between the stressed syllables [Birnbaum, 1996, p. 269][8]. Södergran's poem has alternating two- and three-stress lines of which two-stress lines dominate. Of the twenty lines seventeen have two stresses, three have three stresses and one line has one full stress and a rather weak secondary stress. The pace of the poem is thus quick and the clipped nature of the rhythmical structure generates a relentless forward motion. What's more, the truncated, single-stress line *Для ràзрушéнья* presents the poem's greatest rhythmical and semantic contrast, heightening the

[8] On accentual Russian verse, see [Unbegaun, 1956, 86 ff]. On the *taktovík* and the related meter *dólnik*, see [Gasparov, 2001, pp. 148–154]. As a contemporary point of reference, it is interesting to note that the *taktovík* meter is much like the metrical [and rhyming] schemata of contemporary rap music/poetry.

air of urgency and abruptly introducing a note of intense irony[9]. The phrase is all the more striking since the unexpected reversal of sentiment stands in such stark outline to the previous two lines: *Жизнь рождается, / Новая жизнь, / Для ра̀зрушéнья. "A life is born / A new life / For destruction"*[10]. As I shall show below, the imagery highlighted by this rhythmical patterning plays a significant role in conveying the poem's overall message.

Much of the poetic essence of Södergran's poem is defined thus by its rhythm, its poetic imagery and, above all, by the harmonious cooperation of its individual parts. Indeed, although there is a tangible sophistication of form, this is primarily a poem of images that sustain two major motifs: the social and prophetic theme of an impending apocalyptic event for Russia and the more ontological theme of the life-giving essence of natural — and perhaps, also, humanly generated — historical cycles. Thus we see the intense poetic image of blood with its connotations of potential and portending doom combined with its ability to generate renewal. In fact, the assertion of future rebirth comes with the assurance of remediation by blood. Trotzig in particular has noted the complexity of the blood imagery, a verbal tessitura of images:

> From the politcal-historical motif (if one assumes that that is her starting point) arises the theme of the desire to transform life, of aspiring to an outlook on life — a vision of time as a transformation process, and as ongoing metamorphosis. The "revolution theme" or "transformation theme" (*The forces of the new future / In the black earth*) also presents the theme of Eros as either a life force or a deadly force. There runs throughout the entire poem the image of death, of the relationship of death to either life's struggle or life's apotheosis, or as an unforgiven, terroristic fear. The poem becomes a dark mirror into an unknown future: the coming fate, her own individual fate, and the fate of the age, which is inextricably linked to the victim image[11].

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[9] Although the MS clearly shows a comma in the preceding line after the word *жизнь,* Birnbaum (270) reproduces the poem with a full stop before the phrase *Для разрушенья* which would render this phrase more striking as a sentence fragment.

[10] Russian *taktovík* verses can be rhymed or not; Södergran's poem shows no discernable rhyme scheme.

[11] Ur det politiskt-historiska motivet (om man antar att det var hennes utgångspunkt) stiger temat om viljan att förvandla livet, livsåskådningssökandet — visionen av tiden som en förvandlingsprocess, en pågående metamor fos. "Revolutionstemat", förvandlingstemat "framtidens krafter de nya / i svarta jorden" ger temat om eros — eros som livskraft eller dödssugning. Genom alla bildens förgreningar löper temat om döden — om förhållandet till döden antingen som livskamp, livsapoteos; eller som

Although Trotzig reads the final line with the mistaken addition of the word "new" (*de nya*), she correctly concludes that the complex of final images here offers a rather stark conflict with the quietude of the poem's opening line, *Тихо, мухо, мухо*. Indeed, by the second stanza the reader is presented with what is, at first glance, a reflection of the violent society in which the young poet lives. This conflict is at once imagic and verbal: the opening line's lullaby-like rhythm is rendered increasingly uncomfortable by the poet's word choices: *Темная, сочная / липко-густая* (*dark, juicy, sticky-thick*) and by the ultimate phrase *кровь полила́сь* (*blood has begun to flow*).

The disquieting blood imagery is not unexpected given the apocalyptic vision presented here, justifiably associated with the social instability in Russia in the early nineteen hundreds. Yet, Södergran's poetry, even in her juvenile works, comes with any number of visions of blood-stained places and people, often set in the Russian capital, St Petersburg. One can note, among others, her poem written in German in the same year as her Russian verse (April 1907): it presents the pitiable image of a tormented Tsar Nicholas II, who would be more comforted being beheaded than in signing endless death warrants:

Die Newa ist ein grünlicher Strom,
Sie kennt gar manche Sachen,

Die Wellen tragen den Klagelaut
Zum Schloss des russischen Zaren,
Der kann nicht schlafen diese Nacht,
Er fährt sich in die Haare.

Es tropft der Schweiss von seiner Stirn,
Er wagt sich nicht zu bewegen,
Er wäre glücklich seinen Hals
Unters Beil des Henkers zu legen.

Es kommt kein Henker und rettet ihn,
Die Nacht nimmt gar keine Ende,
Er wagt nicht zu stöhnen, und kalter Schweiss
Bedeckt seine klebrigen Hände.

förintelselust, förintelseskräck. Dikten blir en mörk spegel in i en okänd framtid: det kommande ödet, hennes eget individuella och samtidens, oupplösligt förenade i en offerbild [Trotzig, 1978, p. 384].

Am nächsten Tage unterschreibt Er
Todesurteile in Menge,
Und träumt darauf in der nächsten Nacht
Dass ihn sein Volk erhänge.

1 April 1907[12]

The ominous character of this poem is certainly not out of place in Russian poetry of the era. As we have noted, apocalyptic poems abounded in Russia at the time, not surprisingly given the tumultuous social and political situation. Thus, as Trotzig has pointed out, Alexander Blok, the darling poet of St Petersburg in the early 1900s, and his daring poems about the future of Russia make for an interesting complement to Södergran's youthful poem (Trotzig: 382). Other critics have noted how the lexical and thematic content of Blok's poem «*Я ухо приложил к земле*» ("I put my ear to the ground") in particular corresponds closely to the thematic and verbal content of "Tikho, tikho, tikho" It has been pointed out, however, that Blok's poem was published after Södergran composed her verse, so that no direct influence can be inferred. Yet Blok's poem, among many others, does illustrate well the sense of impending catastrophe that many Russian poets felt at the time:

Я ухо приложил к земле.
Я муки криком не нарушу...

[12] The Neva is a greenish stream,
She knows a lot of things,
The waves carry the wailing
To the palace of the Russian Tsar
Who cannot sleep this night,
rubbing his head.

The sweat drips from his forehead,
He dares not move,
He would gladly put his neck
under the executioner's axe.

No hangman comes to save him,
The night brings no end,
He dares not moan, and a cold sweat
Cover his sticky hands.

The next day he signs
Death sentences in droves,
And dreams the next night
That his people have hanged him.

Как зерна, злую землю рой
И выходи на свет. И ведай:
За их случайною победой
Роится сумрак гробовой.
Лелей, пои, таи ту новь,
Пройдет весна — над этой новью,
Вспоенная твоею кровью,
Созреет новая любовь.
November 1907[13]

Witt-Bratström discusses Blok's poem as a possible inspiration for Södergran's Russian poem, but rightly maintains a more reserved stance about the possibility of any direct influence[14]. As has been reiterated, however, both Blok's and Södergran's poems follow the thematic currents of Russian poetry in the early days of the twentieth century. It is not surprising then that other Symbolist poems also bear resemblances to Södergran's work. More striking for its thematic similarities than even Blok's poem is a lyric of apocalyptic bent by the *de facto* leader of the Russian Symbolist movement, Valery Bryusov, who was in many ways, and in contrast to Blok, the *bête noire* of Petersburg poetic circles. I have in mind Bryusov's allegorical poem «*Грядущие гуны*» (The Approaching Huns) published in 1905 at the height of the first Russian revolution. With its contrasts and similarities to Södergran's work, Bryusov's work is of particular help in reading more deeply into the young Södergran's lyric. One is struck by the very different tenor of these two poems and, at the same time, by their nearly equal images and nearly equal messages.

[13] I put my ear to the ground.
I will not break the agony with a cry...
Like grain, dig into the evil earth
And grow up into the light. And know:
Beyond their accidental victory
The dusk of the grave crowds in.
Foster, water, shelter this new thing,
Spring will pass over this novelty,
And a new love will ripen
Raised up in your blood.

[14] On this see [Witt-Bratström, 1977, pp. 76 and 91 footnotes 51–53]. A brief but nice reading of Blok's poem and Fedor Sologub's verse with the same title can be read in [Bel'skaja 2013].

Bryusov's seven quatrains offer the image of an apocalyptic world wrought by blood-stained destruction, that is not far from Södergran's own vision of a renewed earth. On a formal level, Södergran's poem is less encumbered by the strictures of meter and rhyme, composed as it is in shorter lines of the freer accentual verse and lacking any rhyme scheme. Bryusov's poem is weightier in its formal make-up, written in tonic verse tending toward amphibrachic trimeter with a strict feminine *abab* rhyme scheme. Most striking is how both poems employ similar lexical items: Particularly notable are the words *грядущие* ("approaching," "coming"), *кровь* ("blood," in various grammatical cases) and *разрушение* ("utter destruction"), terms that each poet uses to similar though not identical effect. The sense of an important future is carried in the rather archaic and certainly religious (and thus, perhaps, apocalyptic) sounding word *грядущий*, often translated as "approaching" or "coming" but sounding to the Russian ear in 1907 like the archaic "cometh" does to English speakers today and carrying the connotation of "impending". In addition, the words "blood" (*кровь*) and "destruction" (*разрушение*) play their lexical roles differently in the two poems, eliciting both similar and disparate meanings while housed in their own differing poetic milieux. Thus, even though both poems share similar words, themes, and motifs and come to comparable conclusions about Russia's future, the two have significantly different ontological focuses.

A closer look at how the two poems' images diverge reveals each poet's understanding of the nature of inevitable change. Unlike Södergran's tranquil opening, Bryusov's poem begins with an ominous apostrophe to the approaching army of Huns:

Где вы, грядущие гунны,
Что тучей нависли над миром!
Слышу ваш топот чугунный
По еще не открытым Памирам.

На нас ордой опьянелой
Рухните с темных становий —
Оживить одряхлевшее тело
Волной пылающей крови.

Поставьте, невольники воли,
Шалаши у дворцов, как бывало,

Всколосите веселое поле
На месте тронного зала.

Сложите книги кострами,
Пляшите в их радостном свете,
Творите мерзость во храме —
Вы во всем неповинны, как дети!

А мы, мудрецы и поэты,
Хранители тайны и веры,
Унесем зажженные светы
В катакомбы, в пустыни, в пещеры.

И что под бурей летучей,
Под этой грозой разрушений,
Сохранит играющий Случай
Из наших заветных творений?

Бесследно все сгибнет, быть может,
Что ведомо было одним нам,
Но вас, кто меня уничтожит,
Встречаю приветственным гимном.

10 August 1905[15]

[15] Bryusov apparently worked on this poem for nearly a year before completing it at the height of the 1905 Revolution. See Kolosova 2010 for a complete discussion of the poem's apocalyptic bent in light of Russian Symbolist themes.

Where are you, O heavy Huns,
Who weigh on the world like a cloud?
Far, under the Pamirian suns,
Your cast-iron tread clangs loud.

Where are you, O heavy Huns,
Who weigh on the world like a cloud?
Far, under the Pamirian suns,
Your cast-iron tread clangs loud.

Swoop down in a drunken horde
From your dark encampments, arise
Revive us In a tide of crimson, poured
Over this land that dies.

O slaves of freedom, pitch
Your tent by the palace gate.
Plow up the happy field and ditch
Where the throne shone on your fate.

Heap books to build a fire!
Dance in theirjoyful light.
Foul the altar steps with mire:
You are children in our sight.

And we, the poets, the wise,
From the onslaught that darkens and raves,
Defending the torch you despise,
Shall hold it in deserts and caves.
Under the threatening storm,
The tempests that raven and tear,
What will the hazards of harm
From our long labor spare?

All that we only knew
Shall perish and sink and grow dim.
But you who shall slay me, you
I salute with hosanna and hymn.

(tr. Deutsch & Yarmolinsky pp. 90–91)

The picture of approaching and unavoidably destructive events, the necessity of blood, and the transformation of the future world are all here as they are in Södergran's poem. Yet the question arises: How do these nearly identical images with their closely tied themes and conclusions coalesce into such different poems? In large measure, the answer to the question requires raising another question, that is: What does each poet see as the essence of blood, its nature (violent or mystical) and what is its efficacy?

Bryusov's images of military invasion from outsiders and barbarians, — here equated to the Asiatic Huns — of bloody confrontation, of book burning, of the ironies of fate, and of blood spillage all engender the fear of violent confrontation, of anti-[pseudo]intellectualism and of defeatist resignation to an ironic prophesy. Indeed, the poem is surprisingly clairvoyant in foreseeing the fascist takeover of Europe a quarter of a century later. Södergran's images, on the other hand, evoke a sense of violence largely because she jolts the reader into recognizing its possibilities with her extra-rhythmical and truncated line *Для разрушенья (For destruction)*. Yet, this jarring image of violence is not sustained.

There is, as we have noted, a sharp contrast within Södergran's poem's revealed in the subtle movement from quietude to violence and bloodshed and back to quiet. In this regard, the second stanza initiates this transition with its uncomfortable description of blood. The Russian word here, *сочная*, (given fittingly as *saftig* in the Swedish translations) means not only moist, but also luscious, succulent, mellow, or juicy, — with its connotations of fruit juice — and even "alive" as in plants (*cf.* the English term "wick"). Thus the image conjured by the word is one of life-giving viscosity. Combined with the verb *полилась* (where the prefix *по-* adds the connotation of inception or beginning, *i.e.* "has begun to flow") it also calls forth an image of the life-giving forces of nature that begin to run in seasons of renewal.

Unlike Bryusov's violence, Södergran's vision is one of renewal and transfiguration through a "quiet" process of destruction, birth and nourishment, in spite of the uncomfortable images of flowing blood. In fact, even though her second stanza acknowledges blood flow as an element of change, even destructive change, Södergran's choice of the verb "began to flow" lends a quite different air to her poem than we see in Bryusov's. The Russian verb *полилась* mitigates to a certain degree the potentially violent blood imagery since it recognizes the "flow" of blood

in all of its connotations. It is worth noting here that the two Swedish translations of this poem choose rather different verbs that result in quite different interpretations of this phrase. While Horace Engdahl's version has the phrase "vällde blodet fram" (the blood gushed forth), Tito Colliander's version has simply, and more accurately, "blod / började rinna" (blood / has begun to flow)[16]. The latter more directly connotes the sense "starting" conveyed by Russian original (a perfective verb with an inceptive sense, in the past tense). Södergran's choice of verb here is neutral at most, and can carry either a sense of sudden beginning or of anticipated, even natural, order. Thus, Trotzig rightly imagines the myriad themes possible in Södergran's choice of a non-committal verb. Indeed, the blood flowing can be resignation to the blood of pulmonary disease, or the positive flow of blood within the organism that heals, or to the life cycle that begins with, as Trotzig says, *kvinnoblödningen* (384).

It is impossible to ignore the very different life situations of these two poets writing about the events around them and their perceived consequences: one a school girl doubtlessly experiencing a growing awareness of her womanhood and femininity in a violent, hierarchical political society, the other a well-established leading male poet, revered and often feared by those of over whom he had authority[17]. Thus, Bryusov's poem of destruction sees fear, flight and ultimate resignation as the only way to purify political wrongs. By contrast, Södergran's shows an ironic faith that the apocalypse can be effected from the inside, from the individual epiphany. And while Bryusov's poem brings the brutal forces of history to the forefront, Södergran's brings the process of birth and rebirth, with its inevitable and necessary blood and pain, to the fore. Ultimately Södergran's imagery of birth and the feminine intimacy with blood dissipates the discomfort of the necessary flow of blood. Unlike Bryusov's poem, which sees the blood as "washing over" in a violent wave and renewal arising from it, Södergran's blood seeps and "waters" the world of the apocalypse, as does the feminine blood the child who will be born.

The approaches to the image of inevitable changes coming to Russia (and perhaps to all the world) are markedly different in these pieces. Both welcome the inescapable fact of the approaching revision, and, in-

[16] Engdahl's translation is quoted in [Rahikainen, 2014, p. 63], Colliander's translation is found in [Trotzig, 1978, pp. 383–384].

[17] See [Ašukin & Ščerbakov, 2006] for a biography of the sometimes authoritarian Bryusov.

deed, welcome the inevitable change — indeterminate as it might be — although on very different terms: the iron-like army of Huns contrasts the birth-giving images of Södergran's almost garden-like picture at the poem's close: *Въ черной землѣ* (In the black earth), a synecdoche that unmistakably connotes the fertile black earth of the Russian steppe land and by extension Russia and the earth as a whole[18].

Each of these poems expresses an ultimate irony of resignation to overwhelming forces of history. Resignation for Bryusov's narrator, however, highlights a naïveté and ignorance on the part of those violently conquered by inevitable change while Södergran's poem expresses acceptance of the same forces in terms of renewal in a cycle of death and rebirth that is as natural as Bryusov's all-conquering Huns are unnatural. Herein lies a crucial distinction between revolution and evolution: Bryusov's poem expresses an essential tendency to see and affirm the destructive violence of existence, while Södergran's expresses an essential tendency to see and affirm the cyclical life-giving matter of existence.

Clearly the social and political conditions of Edith Södergran's Petersburg together with the circumstances of her personal life helped give rise to this unique lyric. As an expression of her linguistic and lyrical genius these twenty lines reveal a notable ability to express lucidly a depth of poetic sentiment in yet another of her youthful languages. Imparting as it does her views of the Tsarist regime's harsh and uncompromising reaction to civil unrest, the poem adopts the common themes and metaphors of older and contemporary Russian poets, whose vision of an impending apocalyptic Russian future are expressed in poems of violence, strife and revolutionary bloodshed. Yet, Södergran's youthful viewpoint adds elements of hopeful evolution to any vision of a future catastrophe, rendering the blood metaphor meaningful as both a portent of loss and an element of nourishment and life-giving renewal. As a talented young woman surrounded by political upheaval and at the same time infused with the poetic artistry of the Russian capital, it is not surprising that Södergran produced this poem of complex awareness, genuine sentiment and far-reaching vision.

[18] Although the soil around Roshchino and St Petersburg is rather meagre and not well suited for lush agriculture, the image of "black earth" was a well establisehd metaphor for the Russian land and the nourishing earth by Södergran's time. In this sense one can cite poems by Merezhkovsky ("Над немым пространством чернозема...") and Voloshin ("Быть черною землей") among many others.

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О КОНТЕКСТЕ РУССКОГО СТИХОТВОРЕНИЯ «ТИХО, ТИХО, ТИХО» ЭДИТ СЁДЕРГРАН

Для цитирования: *Crnković D.* On the contexts of Edith Södergran's Russian poem "Tikho, tikho, tikho"// Скандинавская филология. 2018. Т. 16. Вып. 2. С. 323–339. https://doi.org/10.21638/11701/spbu21.2018.209

Анализируется единственное стихотворение Эдит Сёдергран, написанное на русском языке, в его литературном, лингвистическом, культурологическом и историческом контекстах. Стихотворение «Тихо, тихо, тихо», созданное в период, когда поэт экспериментировала с полиязычной поэзией для своей так называемой *Vaxdukshäft* («Клеенчатой тетради»), отражает преемственность классическим размерам русской поэзии и родственность русским символистам, в том числе поэзии А. Блока и В. Брюсова. В отличие от ряда предыдущих исследований, в которых стихотворение оценивается как юношеские стихи, написанные находящейся в культурной изоляции девушкой-«иностранкой», к тому же живущей в замкнутой частной среде, делается вывод о том, что эти строки были написаны в духе исторического момента. В стихотворении Сёдергран мы сталкиваемся с разнообразными и впечатляющими образами — от передающих насилие до наполненных мистицизмом, и это говорит о лабиринте разнообразных эмоций, глубоком внутреннем опыте и озабоченности общественно-политической ситуацией, которые хочет передать поэт. Несмотря на то что в стихотворении преобладают образы разрушения, кровопролития и перерождения, которые можно связать с личным опытом страдавшей от туберкулеза Сёдергран, эти образы также можно вывести и из таких в корне отличающихся друг от друга контекстов, как сотрясаемое террором и революционным насилием общество и крепнущее самовосприятие молодой женщины. Таким образом, рассмотренное в более широком контексте восприятия Сёдергран литературных и культурных норм своего времени, а также его политических потрясений, стихотворение отражает не только ее природный поэтический дар, но и утонченное восприятие окружающего мира, несомненно, выдающиеся для столь раннего этапа творческого пути.

Ключевые слова: версификация, А. Блок, В. Брюсов, литературные контексты, образ крови, русская поэзия, Эдит Сёдергран, символизм, символисты, стихосложение.

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Received: March 28, 2018
Accepted: May 21, 2018